

Drivers in and obstacles to innovation in work inclusion for people with intellectual disability; a new organization of the work measure Permanently Adapted Work in Public

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to discuss how social innovation can contribute to solving a comprehensive challenge: work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. We explore how a new organization of the measure Permanently Adapted Work in Public (VTAO), described as an incremental innovation, can promote work inclusion. We use theories of social innovation as an analytic framework for the analysis. The paper focuses on conditions that can promote or hamper successful implementation of this innovation. It is based on data from one of the work packages, including a qualitative study, in a large, ongoing study of work inclusion for people with intellectual disability with the title “(.....)”. In this specific work package, we have so far interviewed 13 employees with intellectual disability, and 27 service providers at three sheltered workshops, four local NAV offices and three regional NAV offices. The study shows that the innovation helps facilitate work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. Several conditions related to the characteristics of the innovation, as well as social and cultural factors, seems to be crucial to its success. Structural conditions, such as economic and human resources, are also important for the implementation. Nevertheless, legislations and regulations for work measures and current practice at The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service, seems to be obstacles to promote the use of the innovation more widely. In the conclusion we stress that social innovation promotes work inclusion for people with intellectual disability.

Keywords: Work inclusion, intellectual disability, social innovation, incremental innovation

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses how social innovation can contribute to solving complex challenges or wicked problems such as work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The

innovation we have studied is a new organization of the measure Permanently Adapted Work in Public (VTAO). The paper is based on data from one of the work packages in an ongoing study of work inclusion of people with intellectual disability with the title

“Rethinking work inclusion for people with intellectual disability”. We focus on conditions that can promote or hamper successful implementation of the innovation. In the introduction, we elaborate the purpose of the paper, background information, how we understand disability, the situation of people with intellectual disability on the labor market, relevant labor market measures, and finally social innovation as a theoretical perspective for understanding work inclusion.

1.1 A social-relational understanding of disability and work exclusion

According to the medical model, and individual understanding of disabilities, “intellectual disability” is a common term for various conditions and diagnoses associated with cognitive disabilities (Tøssebro 2010). It involves impaired cognitive skills, and also varying degrees of challenges in motor skills, language, social competence and ability to perform everyday activities. It is common to divide the diagnosis in easy, moderate, severe and profound intellectual disability based on how extensive the challenges are. In our study, we focus primarily on experiences and challenges faced by people with easy or moderate intellectual disability. However, the present paper argues for a social-relational model of disability, which emphasizes that disability is a result of the gap between demands made by the society and the individual's preconditions (Tøssebro 2010). The UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Norway in 2013, is based on a social-relational understanding of disability (UN 2008). According to this understanding, lack of work inclusion is mainly a result of excessive demands from the ordinary working life.

1.2 Work inclusion for people with intellectual disability

People with intellectual disability are mainly excluded from ordinary work in Norway, despite political goals and initiatives. This group is a highly segregated group in the labor market, and is probably the most vulnerable group in terms of risk of work exclusion. In 2013, only 25 percent of people of working age with a known intellectual disability in Norway were employed (NOU 2016:17). Almost all those employed have jobs with adapted measures, and 90 percent work in sheltered workshops and 10 percent in ordinary

workplaces (ibid.). The employment rate for people with intellectual disability is very low and has probably decreased instead of increased in recent years (Tøssebro 2012).

Access to employment is important for quality of life for people with disabilities (Reinertsen 2016, Gjertsen et. al. 2014, Olsen 2009). The UN's CRPD establishes that people with disabilities have equal rights to be included in work (UN 2008). According to the green paper “On equal terms” (NOU 2016:17) more people with intellectual disability should be given the opportunity to have ordinary jobs, and also underlines this groups right to assessment of work capacity. Today, many people with intellectual disability in Norway are granted disability benefits when they turn 18 without serious assessment of their capacity to work. More emphasis is given to diagnosis than to individual resources and motivation. Once disability benefits are granted, people with intellectual disability are not treated as potential employees, irrespective of their desire to join the regular workforce (Proba 2016). Other reasons for exclusion from ordinary workplaces include low expectations for the competencies and capacities of people with intellectual disabilities having to compete with other marginalized groups over work inclusion measures, lack of political will to prioritize this group, negative attitudes and lack of competence among employers and NAV (Reinertsen 2016). Moreover, metaphorically speaking, the gap between individual preconditions and demands from working life are widening.

1.3 Labor marked measures

Over the last few years, there has been an effort to improve the quality of work inclusion services for people with disabilities (Stjernø and Øverbye, 2012). Labor market measures aim to support employment for people with disabilities. People with intellectual disability who receive disability benefits can work in the permanent adopted measure VTA in a sheltered workshop. About 20% of people with intellectual disability between 20 – 69 years work in VTA (Engeland and Langballe, 2017; Wendelborg et.al. 2017). They are regular employees under the Work Environment Act and have the same rights and obligations as employees in the regular labor force, except when it comes to wages. Since they receive disability benefit, people with intellectual disability only receive so-called bonus salaries.

Workers in VTA can leave for up to six months to work at a regular workplace to facilitate a transition from sheltered to ordinary work activities, but this rarely happens for people with intellectual disability. The Regulation for Work-Related Measures (2009) specifies that VTA shall contribute to the development of a person's resources and qualifications through production of goods and services. The types of activities offered through VTA vary, and include regular work activities, leisure activities, training and qualification (Gjertsen et.al. 2014). Although VTA is to be evaluated periodically to assess possibilities for transfer to other work-related measures, education or ordinary work, this rarely happens for people with intellectual disability. Furthermore, VTA is increasingly offered to people with different types of challenges, including substance abuse, social maladjustment and mental health issues (Spjelkavik and Frøyland, 2012). The number of places in VTA for people with intellectual disability has decreased over the last few years (Tøssebro and Söderström, 2011). Some of those working in VTA work at ordinary work places one or several days per week. VTA is assigned by NAV and is organized by sheltered workshops.

Since January 2016 VTA could be organized directly at ordinary workplaces (VTAO). VTAO is both assigned and organized by NAV. Nevertheless, this work measure is rarely used for people with intellectual disability. According to Reinertsen 3,2% of adults with intellectual disability work in VTAO. According to Engeland and Langballe (2017) it is only 2,5%. VTAO as a measure is in line with the supported employment-thinking and the concept of "place then train". It is central with fast work practice at an ordinary workplace. This approach has not been widely used when it comes to people with intellectual disability. Still, Frøyland and Spjelkavik (ed. 2014) argue that supported employment (SE) is suitable for people with intellectual disability as well. Employers are motivated to tailor jobs to people with intellectual disability, and offer them permanent positions in return for access to state-sponsored supervision and financial support. This paper focuses on a new organization of VTAO, where a sheltered workshop has taken over the responsibility from NAV.

1.4 Wicked problems require social innovation

In this paper we argue that work inclusion for people with intellectual disability can be seen as a wicked problem – a social challenge that is difficult, but important, to solve. According to Sørensen and Torfing (2012), wicked problems are characterized by being hard to define and difficult to solve, and they stress that "formulation and implementation of new and creative solutions are needed." (p. 3). Work inclusion for this group is also a challenge that has several owners, and that requires different actors to collaborate, and collaborate in new ways. In other words, the complex challenges associated with work inclusion for this group require social innovation. Social innovation can be understood as the process and outcome of taking new knowledge in use, combining existing knowledge in new ways or applying existing knowledge to new contexts (Wegener 2015). This is primarily about creating positive social change, and improving social relations and collaborations to address a social demand (European Commission 2013). The political and research agenda emphasizes innovation in the public sector (Willumsen and Ødegård ed. 2014). The Norwegian research council (NRC 2018) underline the need for more knowledge about conditions that promote or hamper success in innovation in the public sector.

Research-based knowledge on how to succeed with work inclusion for people with intellectual disability is scarce. Several sheltered workshops, regular workplaces and social enterprises have developed good practices, but these are not sufficiently documented, analyzed or disseminated. Knowledge about how people with intellectual disability can make transitions between various work settings is also poorly developed. There is a need for identifying good work inclusion practices. This paper can be seen as providing one small step on that pathway.

2 Social innovation as a theoretical framework

The aim of this paper is, as mentioned, to discuss drivers in and obstacles to the success of a new organization of a work measure, where the goal is to promote work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. We will now present a theoretical framework of social innovation for the discussion.

The concept of innovation was, until the last few decades associated with the private sector. Today, there is a stronger focus on innovation in the public sector and on social innovation. The growing number of wicked problems in the public sector requires new and creative solutions (Sørensen and Torfing 2012; Willumsen and Ødegård ed. 2015). Innovation has been identified as something that can solve challenges related to welfare services. Innovation in the public sector aims to improve welfare services by trying to increase the effectiveness and quality of services, and find better solutions. The aim is to benefit society by responding to certain societal challenges, or to achieve more with the resources available. In other words, both economic and social purposes are present (Wegener 2015). Innovation in the public sphere is concerned with services as well as goods. Moreover, innovative strategies are developed not only in different public sectors, but also in collaboration between these sectors, or in collaboration with the private and voluntary sectors, as well as with welfare service users.

When it comes to work inclusion for people with intellectual disability, we initially described this as a wicked problem with several owners in the public sector, but also in the private and voluntary sectors. In the paper we therefore mainly use the expression “social innovation” since our focus is on a social challenge demanding collaboration not only within the public sector, but between public sectors as well as collaboration with actors in private and voluntary sectors. Important actors include among others, the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service (NAV), sheltered workshops, municipalities, the voluntary sector, the ordinary labor market (private and public) and service recipients. The perspective of social innovation makes particularly clear the need for collaboration within and between different sectors and several levels and areas (Kobro ed.2018; Willumsen et.al. 2015). The purpose of social innovation is to solve concrete challenges that cannot be solved by single actors on their own (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). The theory of social innovation enables us to focus on the process of how doing things in new ways contribute to positive changes and solutions.

There is no common definition of “social innovation”, nor are the criteria consistent. Still, all definitions of innovation include developing and realizing new ideas. Innovation can mean a

break with old practices and common understandings, although it does not have to be something radically new, but may instead be new in a particular context (Kobro ed. 2018). In Norway, KS’s definition of innovation in public as something new, useful and utilized, and “a new or better solution so good that it will be used”, is often referred to (ibid.). In this paper we use the definition of Kobro (ed. 2018:17): “Social innovation is new solutions (products, services, and methods of organization) that meet social needs (more efficiently than other alternatives), and that create new social collaborative relationships at the same time.” This definition stresses the fact that social innovation has social impact aims, creates social value, and is social in its method of implementation; it is innovation that creates social value in both aim and method. Further, Kobro (ed. 2018) emphasizes that to count as an innovation, new ideas must lead to a solution to an identified problem, and must find a form and a practice that works for some people. This is in line with KS’s point that an innovation must be new, useful and utilized. According to Kobro (ed. 2018), new and useful solutions left unused do not count as innovations, a claim that is also in line with Sørensen and Torfing (2012:4), who say that “innovation is a dynamic process through which problems and challengers are defined, new and creative ideas are developed, and new solutions are selected and implemented.” They stress that innovation means change, but not all changes are innovations; only changes breaking with common practice and understandings are innovations. And, importantly, it does not matter whether the innovation is a result of something completely new, or of copying: If the solution is new in a given context, and is being implemented in this context, it is an innovation. Further, *the innovation process* consists of several phases: identifying a problem, finding different solutions, choosing a solution, implementing the idea and spreading it (Sørensen and Torfing 2011). The phase of developing an idea includes defining a challenge, coming up with ideas and establishing the aim. In the selection phase, we choose one idea. The implementation phase is the most important one, insofar as this is the phase in which an innovative idea becomes an innovation: the idea is now being made concrete, to be realized in practice. To mean something, an innovation must therefore be constituted in and by a practice (Fuglsang

2010). In other words, the innovation occurs by the implementation. This is in line with Kobro's (ed. 2018) definition of "social innovation". According to Sørensen and Torfing (2011) the idea must, in addition, be spread, and thereby made known in the organization or to other services. Not everyone agrees with this requirement; while some stress the importance of innovation being completely implemented and disseminated, others do not. Another issue is the fact that an innovation process is rarely linear and predictable. Unforeseen conditions can make the process take unknown directions.

Further, the degree of novelty of the innovation is relevant (Engen and Holen, 2014). The concepts of *radical* and *incremental* innovation can be seen as representing opposite ends of a novelty spectrum (de Brentani 2001). A *radical innovation* is characterized as a total and rapid change; an *incremental innovation* is characterized as a change that implies small adaptations to the status quo, and is often described as a step-by-step process: We use something already existing and use it in a new context or in a new field, or make it available to new users. We can also talk about *bricolage innovation*, which is small changes in the everyday practice of services. Wegener (2015) defines this as "everyday innovation".

Nor is it irrelevant how the innovation has been initiated and by whom (Høiland and Willumsen 2015). We can talk about different drivers of or sources for innovations. Some of the most often recognized are "top-down", user, collaborative, and practice-related innovations. Innovation in the public sector is often characterized as a *top-down innovation*. In the public sector, central levels of government often plan the innovation, in order to accomplish political aims, though with the intention to complete it at the front-line of service organizations where service providers meet users. One example is the NAV-reform. *Practice-related innovations* or innovations initiated and driven by co-workers, are characterized by so-called everyday innovations (Wegener 2015) which are carried out by the services to the users (Fuglsang 2010). This kind of innovation is often seen as "bottom-up" innovation (Høiland and Willumsen 2015). With regard to *user-driven innovations* those receiving services are involved in initiating and/or implementing the innovations. *Collaborative innovation* is characterized by people with different resources, experiences and knowledge working together to solve a wicked problem (Kobro ed.

2018), and is characterized by how relevant and affected actors can accommodate the development and implementation of new and bold ideas in ways that reinvigorate welfare services. The management and end users can participate in the collaboration, and in that case collaborative innovation can be seen as a synthesis of the other types of innovations. Collaboration and co-creation are central parameters when talking about social innovation.

In order to understand the opportunities for and limitations of implementing an innovation, it is important to identify drivers and barriers. In the literature, we can find several, often discussed barriers to and factors for the success of innovations. Inspired by Van Meter and Van Horn (1977), and for analytical purposes, we distinguish between three different conditions that can influence the success of the innovation: characteristics of the innovation itself, cultural and social conditions, and structural conditions. The discussion of barriers and drivers for the success of the innovation later in this paper, is based on these distinctions. *Characteristics of the innovation* include what characterizes the innovation and in what way and to what degree different sides of the innovation influence the implementation. This includes how radical the innovation is, how it is initiated etc. *Cultural and social conditions* draw attention to the fact that social innovation always takes place in a social and cultural context. The innovation will be interpreted and adjusted by those implementing it. Cultural conditions are a matter of which values and attitudes the innovation is ascribed by those involved. Social conditions includes how the relations between the different actors in the innovation process influence the implementation process. *Structural conditions* include the resources that are available in the implementation of the innovation. Financial and human resources are often crucial for implementing an innovation. Structural conditions also encompass regulations etc. that affect the opportunities for social innovation.

3 Method

This paper is based on data from one of the work packages in an ongoing large research project about work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The research project consists of four interrelated work packages

containing different operationalized research questions and methods.

The work package on which this paper is based focuses on how sheltered workshops, by rethinking work inclusion and collaboration with different actors, can succeed to achieve work inclusion. We want to develop new knowledge about criteria for and barriers to success with respect to work inclusion.

The work package consists of qualitative interviews with service providers at three sheltered workshops and NAV, and persons with intellectual disability working in VTA and VTAO.

3.1 Inclusion criteria and sample

Target groups for the interviews are participants in VTA and VTAO schemes, leaders and service providers at various levels in sheltered workshops, NAV, and employers at ordinary work places who have experience with employees with intellectual disability. In total, we have interviewed 40 informants (27 service providers and 13 employees in VTA and VTAO) this fare in the project. This paper is based on some of these interviews. We have translated their quotes to English.

3.2 Recruitment, data collection and analysis

The recruitment process was strategic. We contacted the selected sheltered workshops, presented the project and asked if we could interview leaders, ordinary employees and participants in VTA. At the same time, we contacted NAV and asked if we could interview a person with responsibility for the work measures VTA and VTAO, as well as people with intellectual disability participating in VTAO.

Most of the interviews were conducted at sheltered workshops and at NAV offices. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. We stressed the importance of letting the informants have enough time to think before they answered. We used a semi-structured interview approach, with thematic interview guides that were constantly revised as we got deeper insights into the field as the project progressed (Oliver et al 2012). The topics of work inclusion practice, success criteria and barriers were examined. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data were systematized, coded and re-coded throughout. Data from the interviews were analysed by the use of thematic analysis.

3.3 Strengths and limitations

As underlined, this paper is based on one of the work packages in a large study of work inclusion among people with intellectual disability. Some strengths and limitations of this work package's methodology can be recognized. Since people with intellectual disability rarely work in the VTAO-measure, it was challenging recruiting employees in VTAO receiving support from NAV. We have therefore not been able to compare the support. Further, interviewing people with reduced cognitive skills is methodologically challenging. They can have difficulty understanding concepts and may have difficulty expressing themselves orally. However, the validity of the study is strengthened by the way it was conducted. We stressed spending time during the interviews, used operationalized and easy-to-understand questions, and explained questions or words that the informants did not understand. At the same time, it is a strength that people with intellectual disability participated as informants and shared their experiences working in VTAO. It is also a strength that we included different actors as informants - employees, as well as service providers at sheltered workshops and NAV.

3.4 Ethical aspects

People with intellectual disability comprise a group that require special ethical considerations when participating in research because of their reduced cognitive capacity. They have previously been seen as forming a vulnerable group and have therefore been excluded from participating in research concerning themselves (Söderström and Tøssebro 2011)). Today, several researchers claim that it is important to let the voices of so-called weak groups be heard. We have taken all necessary precautions to ensure the integrity and dignity of the participants in the study. The ethical criteria for research have been taken into account throughout the whole process. Voluntary participation, confidentiality and the anonymity of the data are fundamental. The study is approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). We have handled the data in line with the principles laid down by the National Committee for Research Ethics in the

Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH). All participants were informed orally and by written information letters about their right to withdraw from the study without stating a reason, and they were assured that confidentiality would be maintained. We also obtained written informed consent from all participants with intellectual disability. The other informants gave oral consent.

4 Results: The innovation - a new way of organizing the measure Permanently Adopted Work in Public (VTAO)

The overall results from the interviews showed several innovative work inclusion practices where sheltered workshops are a key actor. In this paper we wanted to discuss one example of innovative practice. We have therefore chosen to highlight results about one social innovation attempt that aims at work inclusion for people with intellectual disability by organizing the Permanent Adopted Work Measure in Public (VTAO) in a new way. We analyze it as an incremental innovation and do not discuss whether it actually counts as an innovation or not relative to different criteria. We will first elaborate what characterizes this innovation.

VTAO is originally a state-financed measure organized by NAV. Employers from ordinary work places receive 5711 NKR monthly from NAV to hire a person with an intellectual disability and facilitate and provide support for this person. The VTAO-employees receive disability benefits, and the employers are not obliged to pay this person a salary – they are encouraged to pay a small extra salary but how this is practiced varies. By comparison, those working in VTA at a sheltered workshop receive a bonus salary of minimum of 20 NKR for each work hour. The payout from NAV to the employers is meant to cover expenditure associated with extra support at the workplace. VTAO is today rarely used for people with intellectual disability.

In this case, instead of administrating the VTAO measure themselves, NAV collaborated with the municipality to establish a 50% position located at a sheltered workshop. This sheltered workshop has comprehensive experience with administrating the VTA measure. In practice, this means that one person, working in the sheltered workshop, has the responsibility for

supporting both employers and people with intellectual disability working in the VTAO measure.

The new organization of VTAO was initiated by the local NAV. NAV received 10 VTAO positions, but expressed a need for help. NAV contacted a sheltered workshop and asked whether they could help them organize the measure. At the same time, they asked the municipality if they could finance a position at the sheltered workshop as a condition for realizing the measure for people with intellectual disability. Today, the sheltered workshop does not have must contact with the municipality about the measure, except when receiving the money. Neither with NAV.

The innovative element of the new organization of the VTAO measure is that the municipality is funding a part-time position at a sheltered workshop. Instead of NAV, it is now the service provider at the sheltered workshop who provides support for VTAO employees and employers. So far, our findings show that the innovation has been successful. Almost all of the 10 people employed in the original VTAO positions have an intellectual disability, and they are still in employment. One of the informants said: *“Yes, we can see that VTAO has been a success. That is very good, after many years, at least 4 years. It has worked and that is the feedback from the employers too. It is the extensive support and the security of having us there when needed.”*

The sheltered workshop has now received three extra VTAO positions, and is now trying to hire. If we look at the definition of “social innovation” by Kobo (ed. 2018), we notice that the new organization of VTAO is a *new solution* that directly *meets a social need*, insofar as the group in question is being excluded from ordinary work. Moreover, the new organization has created a *new social collaboration*, where a sheltered workshop and the municipality are included in the work measure. This is also in line with KS’s focus at new, useful and utilized, as criteria for innovation.

The innovation process can be considered a *collaborative innovation*, since several actors have collaborated to create a new way of organizing the work measure. Three actors are central to the innovation: NAV, the municipality and a sheltered workshop. The employers and VTAO employees have not been involved in implementing the innovation, but are those directly affected by the new organization.

VTAO organized by a sheltered workshop is obviously not a radical innovation, due to the fact that the sheltered workshop has organized the VTA measure for decades. Participants in VTA have also work practice at ordinary work places. Still, VTAO has so far been facilitated directly by NAV in line with the Regulation for Work-Related Measure (2009). We can therefore conclude that the measure is new in its context. We define this as an *incremental innovation* involving small but important, adaptations. We can talk about new collaboration and a new context.

The innovation is characterized by a break from previous way of organizing and administrating the measure. The main difference is that some actors collaborate in new ways. Sheltered workshops have not been involved in organizing this measure. In this case, as mentioned, a service provider from the sheltered workshop provides the support for the VTAO scheme. The content of the work measure is formally the same. Nevertheless, in practice, as we will discuss, there have been some changes, which have affected the extent of the support.

We have summarized some of the results from the interviews in the table below.

Table 1. Results from the interviews: factors relevant for the implementation the innovation

Characteristics of the innovation - a new organization of VTAO	Structural conditions
NAV, a municipality and a sheltered workshop have to collaborate	Laws and regulations influence how the measure VTAO can be organized
Initiated by NAV	Human resources: The sheltered workshop has the human resources needed
Minor changes in the organization implementing the innovation (the sheltered workshop) are needed	Economic resources: The municipality is funding a position at the sheltered workshop

Extra financial resources are needed	Current practice at NAV: people with i.d. are not a priority
Social conditions	Cultural conditions
One key actor (NAV) in the organization of VTAO has been replaced (with a sheltered workshop)	The sheltered workshop has much experience with work inclusion and people with i.d.
A new actor (a municipality) is now involved: Financing a position at the sheltered workshop	Common understanding at the sheltered workshop: - work inclusion is important - support is crucial
The collaboration between NAV, the sheltered workshop and the municipality works well, but NAV and the municipality are not much involved	The collaborators have common interests: increased work inclusion for people with i.d.

5 Discussion: What can promote or hinder innovation in work inclusion?

We will now look more closely at how different conditions can promote or hamper success when it comes to work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. There will probably be other factors involved, but our intention is to highlight some relevant ones.

We have presented one example of social innovation when it comes to work inclusion, a new way of organizing the work measure VTAO as a collaboration between a sheltered workshop, NAV and the municipality – that we have described as an incremental and collaborative innovation. The aim of the new organization of the measure is to facilitate work inclusion for people with intellectual disability in a better way.

5.1 Characteristics of the innovation

The characteristics of the innovation contribute to the success of the implementation of the innovation. First, this is an incremental innovation where the content of the support given to the VTAO employees and employers is quite similar to the support the sheltered workshop already provides for those working in VTA and having work practice in an ordinary work place. The sheltered workshop has not experienced the extent of the new organization of the work measure as being comprehensive, insofar as the municipality provides extra financial resources. As one informant stressed: *“It is important that we keep the earmarked position.”*

Second, two aspects of the new organization contributes in particular to facilitating work inclusion. Previously, those working within the VTAO scheme had to obtain the job themselves. Now, the VTAO jobs are announced positions, and the service provider at the sheltered workshop help establish employment. Previously, VTAO has not been a success for people with intellectual disability, partly due to the fact that this group has not been a priority. One main reason for that is probably both the fact that NAV has limited resources, but also due to some attitudes towards work inclusion among this group. Now, this group has been explicitly prioritized in the VTAO-measure.

Another characteristic of the innovation that can be seen as a success factor, is the way it was initiated. NAV took the initiative to collaborate with the municipality and a local sheltered workshop. The aim was to collaborate to facilitate work inclusion especially for people with intellectual disability. A new organization of VTAO by sheltered workshops can implicitly be seen as a criticism of the existing organization of VTAO, but since NAV initiated the innovation this has not been problematic. The innovation is anchored from below in collaboration with involved actors. Still, this is a local NAV office, and the innovation is implemented in a local context, without necessarily being recognized at a national, government level.

5.2 Cultural and social conditions

Cultural conditions are related to the meanings and values those implementing the innovation put into the innovation, and how they consider and interpret it. In other words, those implementing the innovation are *key actors*

(Van Horn and Van Meter 1977). The innovation in question mostly affected the sheltered workshop, since the responsibility for the VTAO measure is now located there. The innovation takes place in a large sheltered workshop, with ample experience when it comes to working with people with intellectual disability. The workshop has received money to hire a person to provide the necessary support. There is also a common understanding that work inclusion is important and that support during the inclusion process is crucial. When we asked the manager at the sheltered workshop about criteria for success for VTAO, she emphasized that: *“you have to believe in this (work inclusion in public) yourself, and offer close support to both the worker and the employer in the beginning.”*

Social innovation takes place in a field where different actors have to collaborate. These actors may have different and sometimes conflicting interests and agendas. Their focus may be on financial concerns or reducing expenses as well as on the quality of the services, which may create obstacles when implementing an innovation. In our case, we can assume that NAV, the sheltered workshop and the municipality all want to increase work inclusion among people with intellectual disability. The values and attitudes in the context are therefore presumably similar, and the interests not in conflict.

Social conditions concern the relation between those involved in the implementation. In this case, one of the key actors in organizing the work measure has been replaced. Instead of NAV, it is now a service provider at a sheltered workshop who conduct the support. According to our informants, the result of this change is better support. Furthermore, the municipality is a new actor, but plays a withdrawn but nevertheless very important role by financing the position. The other actors – the employees with intellectual disability and the employers - are the same as before. So far, the collaboration has proceeded without problems.

5.3 Structural conditions

Economic and human resources plays a crucial role when it comes to innovations for work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. In this case, the municipality is funding a position at the sheltered workshop, something that has been important for the success of the innovation. Still, whether the new organization

of VTAO is a permanent arrangement will depend on continuous good-will from the municipality. This makes the implementation of the innovation vulnerable, depending on municipal budgets. As is well known, legislative and regulation changes are a matter of political decisions and will.

Another criterion for success that our findings highlight, is the importance of one person assuming specific responsibility for the support. The sheltered workshop has the human resources needed. The competencies and experiences this sheltered workshop have are important. Financial support and having an earmarked position have turned out to be crucial for success.

Innovation processes in the public sector are demanding, since *laws and regulations* influence the possibility for success. This is also the case when it comes to work measures. Laws and regulations influence how the measures are administrated and organized, something that affects the opportunities for innovation and new collaborations. According to the supplementary rules to the Regulations for Work-Related Measures (2009), NAV is responsible for the organisation of the VTAO-measure. The employers have to collaborate with NAV and deliver a written report on the VTAO employees' development in the workplace, and what kinds of adjustments have been made to increase the participant's level of coping.

One major challenge remains when we discuss successful initiatives in the public sector and in collaborations between the public sector and the private and voluntary sectors: How can we systematize and spread the experiences? As pointed out by the Norwegian Research Council; a lot of innovative processes in the public sector have taken place without being systematically evaluated with regard to success (NRC 2018).

6 Conclusion

Our findings contribute to the understanding of social innovation related to work inclusion in several ways. First, our study points to some conditions that are important for the success of the described incremental innovation. These are mainly related to the characteristics of the innovation and cultural and social conditions present in the particular context. We have also discussed structural conditions that are important for success, but which can at the same time can be seen as obstacles.

As our findings show, incremental innovations such as new organization of the VTAO measure can increase the opportunities for people with intellectual disability to participate in ordinary work, but only to a certain extent. Even though the innovation, in this context, is a success, our findings raise some crucial questions about the possibility for innovation related to work inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The existing regulations and lack of political will to prioritize this group when it comes to work inclusion make it difficult to organize work inclusion in new ways. This indicates a need for more radical innovations if we are to succeed with work inclusion for people with intellectual disability to a larger extent, such as for instance a reform where this group is being explicitly prioritized by NAV, and making assessments of work capacity mandatory also for people with intellectual disability granted disability benefits, as stressed in the NOU 2016:17. Finally, and returning to our example of a successful innovation; It is important to learn from successful incremental innovations for the purpose of spreading the experiences.

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